

Cedar River Instream Flow Commission

Final Minutes

SPU Water Quality Lab

August 5th, 2009

Organizations/Members Present:

- Seattle Public Utilities (Tom Fox, Karl Burton, Rand Little)
- King County Dept. of Natural Resources and Parks (Steve Hirschey)
- Muckleshoot Tribe (Holly Coccoli by phone)
- Seattle City Light (Liz Ablow)
- Washington Department of Ecology (Jay Cook)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Larry Schick, Lynne Melder)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Tim Romanski)
- NOAA Fisheries (Tom Sibley)

Guests: USGS (Chris Konrad, Chris Magirl)

- I. Call to Order:** Tom Fox called the meeting to order at 9:38 AM.
- II. Approval of Agenda:** Approved as presented.
- III. Approval of Draft Minutes:** Holly requested a small change the June minutes. In the section outlining the discussion of supplemental flow at the compliance point to compensate for the reconnection of Walsh Creek to Rock Creek above Landsburg, she wanted to change the statement about Carla Carlson reviewing “the proposal” to Carla wanting to review “the flow data”. Rand said he would make the change and then the minutes would be final.
- IV. News and Notes:** Tom F. distributed information on Seattle’s recent efforts concerning water conservation including a press release and water smart tips distributed by King 5. Tom also distributed the annual report for the 1% for Conservation Program. Tom said that current peak demand is predicted to be 230 MGD, whereas peak demand during comparable conditions in 1981 was 350 MGD. This illustrates that the conservation message is working especially in light of the fact that the population has grown considerably since the early 80s.

Steve mentioned that stream flows are very low and King County is implementing their curtailment program. King County will use much less water for park maintenance and will also ask water rights holders to limit diversions during the summer months.

Holly mentioned the smelt kill in Lake Washington. Rand said he had discussed it with Dave Beauchamp at the UW and Dave said that the actual mechanism for the mortality isn't known but it tends to happen when there are unusually high temperatures and a lack of wind. Holly said that Eric Warner had observed approximately 5,000 dead fish at the mouth of the Cedar River including smelt, cottids, large-scale sucker, trout and sticklebacks. Holly mentioned that Eric will not be tagging Chinook salmon at the locks this year due to the low return and concerns about fish stress in the hot weather.

Tim asked about the Walsh Creek reconnection discussion and whether there had been any decisions made. Karl reported that representative staff from King County, SPU and NOAA Fisheries had met in the field to discuss the topic. The group visited Walsh Lake, the historic diversion point for Walsh Ditch, the road washout site, a reach in Walsh Ditch considered to be a fish passage barrier, and Lower Walsh Ditch near the confluence with the Cedar River. King County staff outlined their rationale for requesting that Walsh Creek be re-diverted back into the ditch. SPU staff listened but respectfully disagreed with that rationale. Tim and Holly voiced their support to continue allowing Walsh Creek to follow the historic natural drainage pattern into Rock Creek.

Rand mentioned that the IFC funding targeting Salmon Bay Restoration is no longer necessary due to the fact that SPU has been able to secure funding for this project from an alternative source. This may be an additional source of funds that the IFC could use for projects/research. Transfer of funds is subject to the rules of the HCP Implementation Agreement and the Instream Flow Agreement.

V. Real Time Water Management:

Hydrologic Conditions for Tolt and Cedar: Tom reported that Chester Morse reservoir elevation is declining at the normal pace for this time of year with an elevation that is close the long term average. SPU predicts the pool will split occur between the 14th and the 17th of August and SPU will maintain the split as long as possible. Tom mentioned that there had been very little rain in June, July and early August and SeaTac had recorded the driest June and July period on record. Inflows are currently near the 10 percentile level. The S. Fork Tolt Reservoir inflows are also at the 10 percentile with inflow volumes between 16 and 17 cfs.

Tom informed the IFC that SPU has been exceeding the guaranteed flow requirement of 83 cfs and is currently providing a voluntary augmented target flow range of 103 to 108 cfs. Lake Youngs is currently full and power generation releases have been discontinued at Cedar Falls until it is necessary to release water from the reservoir to meet minimum flow requirements. SPU will continue to supply the extra water to the river as long as it is possible to do so without using an unacceptable amount of reservoir storage. Tom thinks that the additional 20 cfs or so above minimums can be provided until at least September 1st. Tom also said that SPU has been allocating the compensatory flow for Walsh Ditch as agreed by the IFC during June's meeting. Tom distributed a graph showing the summer supplemental block allocation target line, the same line with Walsh Ditch compensatory flow and a line for actual flows. There were no downramping violations in June and July and actual flows were very close to estimated unregulated flows.

Consumption has increased with the recent heat wave but total consumption is still close to the average for the last 20 years. Cedar River diversion is up by 5MGD compared to last year at this time. The SEAFM forecast indicated that 1 in 15 to 1 in 20 dry conditions could require mobilizing the pump plants. Approximately 50 days prior to the date when the 1 in 10 dry SEAFM forecast shows the reservoir elevation reaching 1541', SPU would initiate the mobilization process for the temporary pump plants. SPU has completed the planning process for repairing the damaged power supply cables for the pumps as mentioned at the May meeting. SPU is currently planning to emphasize use of more Tolt water than normal to help reduce the probability of needing to mobilize the pumps. In fall of 2006, SPU water supply used about 55% Tolt water to limit the chance that the pumps would need to be mobilized. This strategy helps delay the decision to mobilize, allowing more time for the return of the fall rains. Currently, it takes 50 days and over 1 million dollars to fully mobilize the pumps once the decision has been made.

Holly asked about SPU water conservation measures. Tom responded that SPU has done everything that is required by the HCP but may put forward additional messages to promote the 1% for Conservation Program. Tom stated that the peak period for water use has already passed, but if conditions worsened and become dry again, SPU may put out additional conservation messages.

Lake Washington: Lynne reported that Lake Washington elevation was just under 21' with a target of 20' for the fall season. The ship canal temperature is in the mid seventies. The saltwater drain was opened for 7 hours during the weekend due to saltwater intrusion associated with the large number of lockages for Seafair. The inspection of the diffuser well screen is complete and it seems to be working fine. The Corps will be monitoring the locks and ship canal for fish mortalities. The flumes have been turned off because there were very few fish using them due to warm

surface water. If there is a problem with saltwater intrusion, the flumes could be turned on to help limit the intrusion. The Corps is looking at a long term solution for the temperature problems at the locks and fish ladder.

Fish Update: Rand reported that this year's sockeye return is the lowest on record with approximately 20,000 sockeye estimated to have moved through the locks. So far, 1318 Chinook salmon have been counted and the expected total is 6,000 for 2009. The average return for Chinook salmon between years 1995 to 2008 is 11,000. Counts will continue through September. Outmigrant counts indicate approximately 1.5 to 2 million sockeye fry and about 100,000 juvenile Chinook outmigrated to the lake. The sockeye broodstock collection weir will be deployed sometime around September 9th this year.

Forecasts and Water Supply Outlook: Larry reported that temperatures in Seattle reached a record 103 degrees one week ago. There was less than ¼ inch of rain in the month of July. There is a slight chance of rain Saturday night but it is supposed to rain early next week. Temperatures will be below normal for the next few days. Larry said that this year should be a moderate El Nino event that is strengthening over time. Larry explained the El Nino effect using a hand drawn diagram on the board. Typically, we can expect 10 to 20% less snow in an El Nino year but there are exceptions. Floods are typically suppressed by El Nino but they can still occur especially in a moderate El Nino year. Rand asked Larry how El Nino affects the timing of fall rains and Larry responded that fall rains can be a bit later in El Nino years, but not always.

VI. Supplemental Studies

Adaptive Management Program Peak Flow Study Scope: Chris Magirl, the project manager, passed out a revised copy of the peak flow management study scope. Chris reviewed the scope emphasizing the objectives and approaches to fulfill each objective. The IFC spent quite a bit of time discussing acceptable representative reaches for direct physical sampling. Chris Magirl and Chris Konrad participated in the discussion, answering questions and providing suggestions. Chris M. wants to submit the scope to the USGS for funding soon in order to meet the deadline and he needs the contracting to be signed by the end of the 2009 fiscal year to do this. If the contract is signed in 2009 for the work to be done in 2010, it will save SPU \$5,000 because more co-op funds are available in 2009. Budgeting for the project has already been allocated by SPU for their part of the study funding for 2009. The IFC agreed that Chris should move forward as long as some of the finer study details can be decided after the funding is approved for the scope. Chris assured the IFC that remaining details of the study would be sorted out with IFC input once the funding had been delegated.

Rand mentioned that there was approximately \$350,000 left in the HCP supplemental studies account. The AMP peak flow study and the Chinook otolith study are expected to use up the remaining funds.

VII. Agenda Items for Next Meeting:

Discuss potentially important IHA parameters and an approach to selecting the parameters of greatest interest in the Cedar.

VIII. Meeting adjourned at 1:00 PM